DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 017 FL 010 824

AUTHOR Waggoner, Dorothy
TITLE Resources to Meet the Educational Needs of Language Minorities: Teachers in Public Schools.
INSTITUTION National Center for Educational Statistics (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Feb 79
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) Conference (Boston, Massachusetts, February 28, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Language Instruction; *Language Teachers; *National Surveys; Second Language Learning; *Teacher Background; Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Education; *Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Findings are presented from the Teachers Language Skills Survey, the first national survey undertaken to estimate how many teachers currently employed in public schools have the backgrounds, experience, education, and skills needed to teach students with limited-English proficiency. Information was gathered on teachers teaching in the 1976-77 school year, and approximately 14,000 teachers were selected in a two-stage stratified sample designed to be nationally representative. The findings are based upon responses from approximately 10,000 teachers adjusted for non-responding schools and teachers. In addition to data about teachers of students with limited-English proficiency, comparisons are presented between public school teachers teaching English as a second language and teachers generally. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED174017

REPORT ON THE TEACHERS LANGUAGE SKILLS SURVEY PRESENTED AT THE TESOL CONFERENCE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, FEBRARY 28, 1979

RESOURCES TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF LANGUAGE MINORITIES: TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dorothy Waggoner, PhD
National Center for Education Statistics

At the TESOL conference in Mexico City last year, I gave some preliminary findings from three of the surveys we are discussing today.[1/] Among them was the Teachers Language Skills Survey. Today I would like to share with you some final findings from that survey, in particular those concerning public school teachers who reported that they were teaching English as a second language in 1976-77. These teachers constituted one in twenty of all public school teachers in 1976-77. There were approximately 100,000 of them.

The Teachers Language Skills Survey was the first national survey ever undertaken to estimate how many teachers currently employed in public schools have the backgrounds, experience, education and skills needed to teach students with limited-English proficiency. It was conducted in the spring and fall of 1977. Information was gathered on teachers teaching in the 1976-77 school year. Approximately 14,000 teachers were selected in a two-stage stratified sample designed to be nationally representative. The findings are based upon responses from approximately 10,000 teachers adjusted for non-responding schools and teachers.

FL010427

A surprising proportion of elementary and secondary public school teachers reported teaching English as a second language in 1976-77. Of the more than two million teachers, 100,000, or one in twenty, indicated that they taught ESL. If each of the teachers

1/ "Non-English Language Background Persons: Three U.S. Surveys", TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 12, no. 3, September 1978, pp. 247-62.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Dorothy Waggoner
Ed. Program Specialist
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

who reported teaching ESL and the additional 20,000 who reported that they were using a non-English language in instruction but were not teaching ESL had 25 students with limited-English proficiency, we would have to assume that many of the students who need programs are already receiving services of some kind. There are two problems with thishypothesis. One is that, in fact, more than half the teachers who reported teaching ESL reported that they spent 10 percent or less of their time in ESL activities. The other is that we do not know what the responding teachers understood by "ESL". What we do know is that these teachers had at least one student whom they had identified as in need of assistance in English which was different from the regular English language arts program.

There were 16,000 teachers who reported teaching ESL more than 50 percent of their time. We can probably assume that these teachers either taught ESL classes or were ESL resource teachers.

Teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 by percent of time spent in this activity

Taught ESL 10% of less of time	51,000
Taught ESL 11-25% of time	26,000
Taught ESL 26-50% of time	8,000
Taught ESL more than 50% of time	16,000

Most of the teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 only taught in English. They were not participating in bilingual education programs using a language other than English in instruction. These teachers did not, apparently, use a non-English language in their ESL teaching either. This was the case with more than three out of four of the teachers teaching ESL.

Twenty-two thousand teachers teaching ESL also used a language other than English in instruction. These teachers were slightly more than half of all teachers using a non-English language. There were 20,000 other teachers who reported using a non-English language but not teaching ESL in 1976-77.

More teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 had skills in other languages than English than did not have such skills. More than half of the teachers reported that they were able to speak one or more non-English languages. These were approximately 51,000 teachers with a speaking knowledge of another language, including 40 percent of the teachers who did not use a language other than English in instruction. Eighteen thousand of the teachers with non-English language speaking skills had such skills in their mother tongues. There were 21,000 teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 with non-English mother tongues.

One teacher in eight of those teaching ESL in 1976-77 was of Hispanic origin. More than half of the teachers with non-English mother tongues had Spanish language backgrounds and 40,000 of the 51,000 able to speak a language other than English reported Spanish speaking skills.

If we believe that all teachers teaching English as a second language to students from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds should have had exposure to other languages and cultures themselves, then the fact that 18 percent of the 1976-77 ESL teachers had learned English as a second language themselves and that a third more had learned a non-English language as a second language is cause for encouragement. However, if we also believe that teaching English as a second language is a profession with a specific discipline and a methodology or methodologies derived from theory, then the Teachers Language Skills Survey findings are a cause for disquiet. Most teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 were not prepared to do so. Nearly seven

in ten had not taken even one course in teaching ESL or in bilingual education. Only a quarter of the teachers reported taking any academic training in teaching ESL. An additional 7 percent had taken at least one course in bilingualism and the theory of bilingual education or teaching language arts or other subject areas through a language other than English but no coursework in ESL as such.

In my report last year, I identified something I called "minimal FSL qualifications". This consisted of at least one course in teaching ESL, a course in history and culture or ethnic studies associated with the background of language minority students and a non-English mother tongue and/or speaking knowledge of a language other than English and/or a language course for teachers of language minority students. By this test, only 18 percent of teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 were qualified.

Most teachers with any academic training to teach limited-English proficiency students appear to have prepared themselves in bilingual education as well as in ESL. Twenty-one thousand of the 24,000 teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 who had taken at least one course in teaching ESL had also had some training in bilingual education.

There were approximately 66,000 teachers altogether who had taken at least one course in teaching English as a second language. However, in 1976-77 39,000 teachers, or more than half again as many as were using their training, were not teaching ESL or using a non-English language in instruction. Twenty thousand of these teachers had never used their training. There were 40,000 teachers with "minimal ESL qualifications." Twenty thousand of them were not teaching ESL or using a non-English language in instruction in 1976-77.

The findings from the Teachers Language Skills Survey provide some comparisons between public school teachers teaching ESL and teachers generally.

There was a different distribution among the grade levels of teachers teaching ESL from that of teachers generally. Proportionally more teachers teaching ESL than teachers generally were assigned to the elementary grades and to multilevel or other situations. Proportionally fewer were assigned to the secondary grades. Ten percent of ESL teachers, as compared with only 3 percent of teachers generally, taught preschoolers.

There was a different distribution by sex. Teachers teaching ESL were more likely to be women than teachers generally. Three out of five ESL teachers were women in 1976-77. Only two thirds of teachers generally were women.

Teachers teaching ESL and teachers generally were about evenly divided between teachers with graduate degrees and those with only bachelor's degrees. However, ESL teachers were slightly more likely to have completed a masters or higher degree than teachers generally. Forty-seven percent of ESL teachers, as compared with 45 percent of teachers generally, had graduate degrees, and 51 percent, as compared with 54 percent, had only bachelor's degrees.

I have already indicated that over half of teachers teaching ESL in 1976-77 reported speaking skills in languages other than English. This is considerably more than the proportion of teachers generally. Among teachers generally, only 29 percent had speaking skills in languages other than English.

There were proportionally many more teachers with non-English mother tongues among those teaching ESL in 1976-77 than among teachers generally. The former were nearly three times as likely to have acquired English as a second language as the latter. Twenty-one percent of ESL teachers, as compared with 8 percent of teachers generally, had non-English mother tongues.

Since 60 percent of children with non-English-language backgrounds in the United States come from Spanish language backgrounds, it is not surprising that Hispanic teachers and teachers who speak Spanish have a significantly higher proportion among ESL teachers than among teachers generally. Only 3 percent of teachers generally were Hispanic in 1976-77 as compared with 13 percent of teachers teaching ESL. Eleven percent of ESL teachers, as compared with 2 percent of teachers generally, had Spanish as their mother tongue. Forty percent of ESL teachers, as compared with only 16 percent of teachers generally, spoke Spanish.

The Teachers Language Skills Survey was undertaken to estimate how many teachers currently employed in public schools have backgrounds, experience, education and skills which would prepare them to teach limited-English-proficiency students. The findings show that only about 66,000 teachers had had at least one course in teaching English as a second language--a fundamental area of preparation. Among those who reported that they were teaching ESL in 1976-77, only a quarter had had this limited preparation.

There is clearly a need for more training programs, both to upgrade current teachers who have language minority students in their classrooms and to prepare new teachers. If 5 percent of all public school elementary and secondary teachers are already involved with language minority students,

then perhaps TESL should be a regular part of teacher preparation programs, regardless of whether preparation for bilingual education is offered.

The findings from the Teachers Language Skills Survey point to an even more fundamental problem than the need for trained teachers. That is that there is still too little understanding of what it takes to teach English to non-English speakers. TESOL, as an organization, and all of us, as ESL specialists, must rededicate ourselves to informing school administrators and others responsible for hiring and assigning teachers that only properly trained teachers can do the job. Only when such teachers are assigned to all classrooms with language minority children will the children be assured of the education they need.

Estimated number of public school teachers with experience teaching English as a second language or using a non-English language in instruction, by selected characteristics: United States 1976-77

(Numbers in thousands)

Selected characteristics	Total	Teaching ESL in 1976-77			Using a non-English language but not teaching ESL in 1976-77	Not teaching ESL or using a non-English language in 1976-77		
		Total	Using a non-English language	Not using a non-English language		With ESL experience	With NEL but no ESL experience	Without ESL or NEL experience
Total teachers	2,182	100	22	77	20	101	36	1,925
Grade level of assignment								
Preschool	76	10	(*)	10	(*)	4	(*)	59
Elementary	895	47	12	35	9	43	22	774
Secondary	958	23	5	18	8	35	17	875
Other 1/	253	18	(*)	16	(*)	12	(*)	217
Sex								
Male	736	19	5	14	6	27	12	673
Female	1,446	81	17	64	14	74	25	1,252
Highest degree earned								
Masters or above	972	47	8	39	10	57	14	844
Bachelors degree	1,181	51	13	37	10	43	22	1,057
Less than a bachelors degree	14	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	12
Highest degree unknown	14	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	12
Training related to teaching limited-English speakers								
ESL 2/	66	24	10	14	(*)	16	(*)	20
ESL and BE 3/	50	21	9	12	(*)	12	(*)	11
Minimal ESL qualifications 4/	40	18	9	9	(*)	9	(*)	9
BE only	36	7	(*)	5	(*)	5	(*)	20

Origin or descent								
Hispanic	64	13	8	6	7	8	5	31
With non-English mother tongue	171	21	11	11	8	18	10	114
Spanish	37	11	7	4	6	5	4	11
French	14	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	11
German	21	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	17
Italian	21	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	16
Other selected European languages 5/	49	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	6	(*)	38
Selected Asian languages 6/	13	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	6
Other languages	17	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	15
Able to speak a language other than English	624	51	20	31	16	50	30	477
Spanish	344	40	17	23	15	34	22	233
French	257	13	5	7	4	18	10	212
German	122	8	(*)	7	(*)	10	6	95
Italian	46	4	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	34
Other selected European languages 5/	71	6	(*)	5	(*)	10	4	49
Selected Asian languages 6/	24	4	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	15
Other languages	40	4	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	30

*Fewer than an estimated 4,000 teachers.

1/ Includes an estimated 109,000 teachers with multilevel or other asssignments and 144,000 whose level of assignment was not ascertained.

2/ At least one course in teaching English as a second language.

3/ At least one course in bilingualism and the theory of bilingual education or teaching the language arts or other subject areas through a language other than English and at least one course in teaching ESL.

4/ At least one course in teaching ESL, a course in history and culture or ethnic studies associated with the background of language minority students, and a non-English mother tongue and/or speaking knowledge of a non-English language and/or a language course for teachers of language minority students.

5/ Includes Czech, Dutch, Greek, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Scandinavian languages, Ukrainian and Yiddish.

6/ Includes Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino languages, Japanese, Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese.

NOTE.--Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Teachers Language Skills Survey, National Center for Education Statistics. Estimates are subject to sampling error.